Metallic Rouge Spoiler-Filled Review

Metallic Rouge, also known as *Metarikku* Rūju, is an original mecha anime series. It is produced by Bones, for the studio's 25th anniversary, an animation company known for *Ouran High School Host Club*, *Gosick*, *Space Dandy*, and *Carole & Tuesday*. Motonobu Hori directed the series. Supervising director Yutaku Izubuchi assisted him in series composition. Toshizo Nemoto wrote the screenplay. Toshihiro Kawamoto designed the characters. Three individuals (Taisei Iwasaki, Yuma Yamaguchi, and Towa Tei) composed the music. As a warning, this review will discuss violence, blood, death, attempted murder, and other related mature themes.

When I first heard about *Metallic Rouge* late last year, I was excited from the get-go, since it has similar vibes to *Lycoris Recoil*, with yuri subtext between Rouge and Naomi Orthmann. The ending and opening sequences are amazing, as are the nice cyberpunk colors. The love of chocolate by Rouge is almost... an obsession. However, the show's context is not very well explained and many episodes are chaotic. This series simulcast, meaning that the English dub came out the same time as the Japanese original voices (with English subtitles). This occasionally happens, like with the *I'm in Love with the Villainess* anime adaptation last year.

The first episode throws viewers into the action without much explanation. Rouge Redstar (voiced by Yume Miyamoto) poses as the assistant of singer Sara Fitzgerald (voiced by Yū

Shimamura). She actually works with Naomi Orthmann (voiced by Tomoyo Kurosawa) who talks with her through a mechanical bird. Neans need injections of nectar or they cease to function. Humans can use it, but it gives them a high. Rouge's mission is later stated: to kill members of the "Immortal Nine." She kills Sarah, who is actually a Nean named Viola Keane. She barely survives. Rouge takes her life orb, with the implication she is a mercenary of some kind, but *seems* to care about little beyond fulfilling her mission.

In the episode that follows, more is revealed, including the fact that Neans have to follow the Asimov Code, a program instructing them to not harm humans. Ash Stahl (voiced by Atsushi Miyauchi) investigates with his assistant, a Nean named Noid 262 (voiced by Chiaki Kobayashi). He learns that Aletheia is covering up Rouge's act of murder. The relations between Naomi and Rouge get more focus, with implications [they are tense](). Jill Sturgeon (voiced by Yui Ogura), who claims to be a journalist, tells Rouge she should make her own choices, setting the groundwork for what happens next. Naomi tells the official story about the battle between the extraterrestrials known as "Usurpers" and humans, who allied with another group of extraterrestrials named "Visitors." Rouge fights old war machines known as Cylinder Heads in her mecha form.

Watch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fom6S9VjavQ

While *Metallic Rouge* is a cool cyberpunk series with a Black co-protagonist (Naomi), using androids, known as Neans in this series, to comment on oppression and discrimination can get a bit dicey. This is especially clear in the third episode. Naomi and Rouge look for their next target, Phantom Verde, who is living in a Nean settlement, and hiding among the Nean. At this point, there is a crack in the relations between Naomi and Rouge. They have an argument. Rouge says she is "free" but Naomi denies this, saying freedom comes from the ability to make your own choices. Rouge says she fights with her "free will." Not long after, Naomi goes even further, declaring that Rouge is only a piece of equipment, and is, in her words, "nothing but a tool for Aletheia." These words infuriate Rouge.

The focus on what "free will" means nor "Gene" Junghardt (voiced by Shunsuke Takeuchi) wanting Naomi to take care of Rouge (his sister) is dicey. Rather, its what happens at the Nean settlement of Watertown. Rouge meets Juval, who heads a Nean group named the Council of Free Neans (CFN). They want to free all their fellow androids even though the Asimov Code limits autonomy, since they *have to* obey orders from humans. He reaches out to Rouge, saying that they want her "free will," since she can interact with humans "as an equal." Somehow, he is killed and she is framed for his death. This is complicated by the fact that the Neans are effectively slaves of humans. The Doctor brought in supports / is passive toward oppression. This merges with vibes present in mid-2000s series.

The next episode of *Metallic Rouge* is more disturbing. Rouge is held by the CFN on suspicion of killing Juval. The police storm the settlement, killing countless Nean. Naomi apologizes. Rouge fights the invading security force. She hallucinates about those who died, some at her hand. The latter is the first time she starts to come to terms with her actions. She fights Doctor Afdal Bashal (voiced by Kenjiro Tsuda), after he kills Rion (voiced by Ayumu Murase). She kills the Doctor before she passes out. I'm not sure that the series lacked weight or is lasers and fog machines, but it is an issue that a "high percentage of dark-skinned and child characters introduced solely to die" so that the audience can feel bad for Neans.

The next episode jumps forward ahead. Rouge finds herself in a disjointed dreamscape, with the Puppetmaster (voiced by Hiroshi Yanaka) probing her memories and looking for "Code Eve." She relives her past with Gene, who told her to hunt down the Immortal Nine, a group said to be the ones who killed her father. It is also revealed where she got her love of chocolate from: her brother. She realizes she is in a simulation and escapes. The Puppetmaster tells her she is a "sad, pitiful puppet" who needs to find her own way to freedom. Naomi gets inside the carnival blimp and is confronted with the

fact that she "betrayed" the Neans. Rouge ends up defending Naomi, by her own choice. They end up escaping, somehow. Another Rouge, made from Rouge's brain scan, appears!

Watch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLFrOK-kIfI

The plot holes and weakness, in terms of writing in some respects, are not offset by the animation, themes, or character designs of *Metallic Rouge*. This is more of an issue in the sixth episode. The series abruptly fast-forwards to Rouge and Naomi on a cruise ship headed back to Earth. They fight Giallon, a shapeshifter who frames people during his murderous rampage. It is revealed that Naomi is an Ochrona agent. She puts Rouge under arrest, charging her under the Use of Artificial Life Code! The fighting in this episode is tip-top, especially by Rouge, who punches suspects in the on-ship library to figure out which one is the perpetrator. This was one of my favorite scenes in the episode. I've never seen a character use such violence, often in a badass way, apart from Yor Forger *nee* Briar in *Spy x Family*.

Apart from supposed changes by Crunchyroll, the seventh episode gets more complicated: Rouge finds herself in Ochrona's hands. Naomi meets with Gene. The plan to terraform Venus, and move it closer to Earth, is explained. It is said that many Neans are born on the planet and die all the time while working on the project. Some people want a piece of Rouge since she is a proto-Nean. She is rescued by Jill, a mysterious Nean, who claims that humans need to be punished. Naomi is worried

that the "gears are out of alignment" since Rouge isn't on speaking terms with Naomi. Rouge talks with Alice/Aes (voiced by Minami Tsuda), in Ash's house. They share information. As you can probably tell, this episode was very confusing. Its convoluted as to who the "good" and "bad" guys are. Its hard to know which side Naomi is on.

Metallic Rouge's eighth episode does not help clear up the confusion. Gene apologizes to Rouge and shows them the memory library. Its a system, which can store human memories in external hardware, specifically that of their shared father, Roy (voiced by Yoshimitsu Shimoyama). They learn that Roy only saw her as research material. Their mother, Eve, regretted turning Neans into beings without freedom. However, there is a key: she put a code that neutralized Asimov's Laws within Rouge and the Immortal Nine. Gene declares that there will be chaos if the Neans are freed, and gives Rouge a choice. This is interrupted with the Rouge-like clone, Cyan Bluestar (voiced by Haruka Shiraishi), challenges her. She refuses to fight. Rouge ends up saying she will protect the status quo her own free will, which makes little sense.

The ninth episode goes further. Mechas battle against one another, including Rouge, who fights for her life. She is unable to stop Gene from being kidnapped and she evenly matches Cyan's abilities. With help from Naomi, she is able to make Cyan unconscious. In the process, it is revealed that Naomi is much older than Rouge. She's a Nean named "First" (first Nean ever created) working on behalf of the Visitors, officially called X Noah, which once had humanoid forms. Like Gene, they do not want Code Eve released. They absurdly claim it would be bad since Neans will be "set free" and "uncontrollable." Understandably, Rouge is angry that Visitors *also* want to use the Neans. They give Naomi "time off," which she uses to join in the fight. She and Rouge fly toward Venus with Ash and Eden.

Watch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joL3nYXSXjU&pp=ygUObWV0YWxsaWMgcm91Z2U%3D

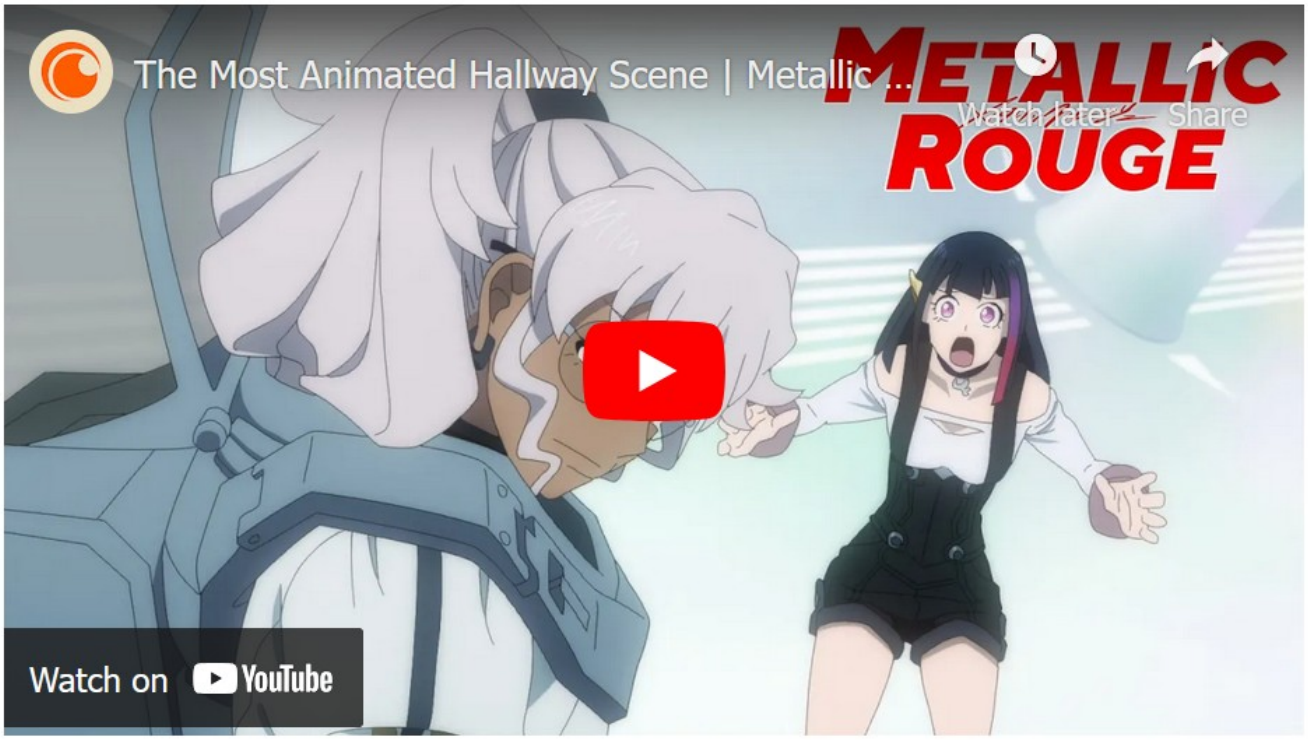
The lead up to the battle aboard a space station, above Venus, against the Puppetmaster and his allied forces, is in the tenth episode of *Metallic Rouge*. Cyan says she wants to be Rouge's sister ("Onee-chan"). Naomi ultimately accepts, although she is skeptical of Cyan. Gene is a prisoner, with the Usurpers working as sponsors of the Puppetmaster. Cyan acts like a kid, saying she was controlled by the Puppetmaster who told her to kill Rouge. Later, Rouge calls Naomi the "best stranger." She plans to stand up for Neans and humans alike to help the one she loves (Gene). The Puppetmaster pulls data from ids of some Neans. This episode ends with missiles headed toward their craft to annihilate them!

The final three episodes center around fighting on the aforementioned space station, with flashbacks, death, blood, and manipulation. There's also the shapeshifting Giallon, fights between Mechas, and revelation of the Puppetmaster's true identity: Roy Yunghart. He's the father of Rouge and Gene. At one point, Rouge's heart gets ripped out. Naomi gives her heart to Rouge. This sacrifice is a big one, showing they are more than "friends" (as Rouge calls them). The final episode throws more revelations at the audience, including the fact that Roy is a Nean clone he put his consciousness into,

that he implanted memories, and engineered an entire war. This included manipulating Silvia into believing she was a revolutionary!

Rouge, the one who said she would uphold "order" between humans and Nean, is entrusted with Silvia's revolutionary ideas. Although she was *not* very revolutionary herself, she follows through, after defeating Roy. This victory involves Naomi sacrificing herself so she can become Rouge's operating system, and be with her forever. Sadly, Cyan dies at Rouge's hand after being manipulated by Roy. Merger of Naomi and Rouge reminds me of Gem fusions in *Steven Universe*. By the episode's end, Gene dies while being rejected by his own children. Rouge says her farewell to Cyan. Rouge sets the Neans free, so they can make their own decisions and are no longer slaves of humans. In this sense, the revolutionaries won.

While there is some yuri subtext between Naomi and Rouge at the end of *Metallic Rouge*, with Naomi living inside of Rouge and talking to her through a mechanical bird, the series leaves a lot to be desired. It ends on a cliffhanger. Rouge and Naomi fight against forces led by Opera (voiced by Mariya Ise). The series does not give Rouge enough time to mourn Cyan. Additionally, Naomi loses her bodily autonomy by merging with Rouge. It is possible that the manga adaptation will do better than the anime series, and not feel as rushed. Without a doubt the series is very convoluted. It would be better in a 24-26 episode format than only thirteen episodes.



Watch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f9pFOGHOqA

I'm not sure whether this series is a mix between mecha and *Carole & Tuesday*. In my view, it is more than sleek cyber noir action. It could set a precedent for future series by Bones. It was said in 2023 that this series was "looking toward the future." Production began in 2019, with the series not specifically targeting female fans, but took a "very interesting angle" with a focus on strong female characters, especially those with strong personalities. This series was said to have high-quality character designs and was called a "convergence of everything." This makes sense as the series has vibes of *Blade Runner*, Japanese android anime *Total Recall*, and that one *What If...?* episode ("What If... Nebula Joined the Nova Corps?").

I'm undecided as to whether this series is a "yuri tokusatsu," has a 1990s feel, or be compared to *Bubblegum Crisis*. However, there's no doubt that that character design, animation, music, and sound effects of *Metallic Rouge* are top notch. After all, Taisei Iwasaki, Yuma Yamaguchi, and Towa Tei composed the series music. Iwasaki was the lead composer of *Belle.* Yamaguchi has done work on series like *Flavors of Youth.* Tei is known for work on the *Super Crooks* ONA and many other productions.

The show's staff is very talented. Motonobu Hori is known for animation on *Atom: The Beginning, FLCL Progressive, Gargantia on the Verdurous Planet, Michiko & Hatchin, Spirited Away,*

Re: Cutie Honey, and *Petite Princess Yucie*. He also worked on *Paradise Kiss* and *Super Crooks*. Similarly, Yutaku Izubuchi worked on the *Cowboy Bebop* movie, and many Gundam and mecha anime. Toshizo Nemoto worked on the script of *The Bank of Bantorra, Gosick*, *A Lull in the Sea*, *Macross Delta*, *Otherside Picnic*, and *Super Cub*. Toshihiro Kawamoto is best known as the character designer of *Cowboy Bebop, Gosick,* and *Wolf's Rain.* He also did animation for *Dirty Pair, Fullmetal Alchemist, Michiko & Hatchin, Ouran High School Host Club,* and *Macross Plus*, and films like *Josee, the Tiger and the Fish*, and many series within the Mobile Suit Gundam franchise.

This series voice actors bring their talent to the forefront. Miyamoto voiced Chi Nishikata in *Teasing Master Takagi-san* season three and Rasta Cole in *Too Cute Crisis*. Shimamura voiced Blake Belladonna in *RWBY: Ice Queendom.* Kurosawa voiced Kumiko Ōmae in two seasons of *Sound! Euphonium,* Phosphophyllite in *Land of the Lustrous,* Misaki Okusawa/Michelle throughout the *BanG Dream!* franchise, Ayano Toki in *Laid-Back Camp* seasons two and three, Mitsumi Iwakura in *Skip and Loafer*, and Tsuki in *Yohane the Parhelion: Sunshine in the Mirror*. Kobayashi voiced Kiyoshi Adachi in *Cherry Magic!* this year. Ogura voiced Kokona Aoba in *Encouragement of Climb*, Sumika Izumino in *Yurikuma Arashi,* and Hime Shirasagi in *Yuri Is My Job!*. Takeuchi voiced Zack Walker in *Astra Lost in Space*.

Watch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsKzVWWZsps

Otherwise, Tsuda voiced Salt in *Flip Flappers*, Yanaka voiced Kukuru's Grandfather in *The Aquatope on White Sand* and Luomen in *The Apothecary Diaries*, and Shiraishi voiced Mai Togano in *Akebi's Sailor Uniform* and Anime Girl in *Scott Pilgrim Takes Off*. Ise voiced Natalia Grennorth in *Bodacious Space Pirates,* Eriko Oniyama in *Yurikuma Arashi*, Antarcticite in *Land of the Lustrous,* and Seita Shiraishi in *Kubo Won't Let Me Be Invisible.* Murase voiced Iruma Suzuki in *Welcome to Demon School! Iruma-kun*, Sakujiro in *My Master Has No Tail,* Tsubasa Yuunagi/Cure Wing in *Soaring Sky! Pretty Cure*, and Mian Long *in Shy,* to name a few roles. Shimoyama is just as talented, along with many of the other voice actors.

If the series had been longer and not as condensed, many of the story and writing issues could have been ameliorated. However, with the shortened format, everything was too compact. Some series do well in a short-series format. The Crewinverse was effective in using *Steven Universe*'s 11-minute format for episodes, at least before *Steven Universe Future,* as some episodes then felt too squeezed together. It is a balancing act to be sure, but having a longer series could have drawn in more fans.

Additionally, the focus on revolutionary ideals could have been more nuanced, instead of painting them as "wild" and "unrealistic." Also, the yuri subtext could have easily been text, without many changes to the story itself. I will always remember badass characters like Rouge, and to an extent, Naomi, and wish that this series had treated them, and others, better. Regardless of how the series panned out in the end, it will surely live on in people's minds, whether as memes, in fanfiction, or otherwise.

Metallic Rouge is currently streaming on Crunchyroll (outside Asia) and Medialink (within Asia), and a Blu-ray for the series can be purchased from Japanese retailers.

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